DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 290 052 CE 049 441

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TITLE Serving Parenting Teens through the Job Training Partnership Act.
PUB DATE 7 Dec 87
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the American Vocational Association Convention (Las Vegas, NV, December 6-10, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Counseling; *Daily Living Skills; *Early Parenthood; Federal Legislation; Federal Programs; *High School Equivalency Programs; *Job Placement; *Parenthood Education; *Pregnant Students; Program Development; Program Implementation; Secondary Education; Unwed Mothers
IDENTIFIERS General Educational Development Tests; Job Training Partnership Act 1982

ABSTRACT

Job Training Partnership Act funds were provided for the Options for Young Mothers project in a mid-sized Texas community. The program was developed and 14 clients were selected. The main components of the program were life skills, General Educational Development (GED) training, counseling, and basic skills training and job placement (Jobs). The life skills component, a 10-week course, provided instruction in communication/assertiveness, family planning, child development, parenting, women at work/stress management, and community resources. The self-paced GED component was designed to teach specifically for the exam rather than to provide broad academic education. The Jobs component included career assessment and development activities, basic skill training, and job placement. The counseling component was based on the individual needs of the client. It proved to be rather impractical, and plans were made to revamp it into a guidance program. After six months of operation, 11 of the original participants had completed all segments of the program with the exception of the GED. Ten were employed--five in full-time employment, two in part-time employment, and three in full-time, temporary work. Eight of the clients were to take the GED in December 1987. (YLB)

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# SERVING PARENTING TEENS THROUGH THE JOB TRAINING PARTNERSHIP ACT

by

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OPTIONS FOR YOUNG MOTHERS
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
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Presented at the annual convention of
The American Vocational Association Guidance Division
Las Vegas, Nevada

December 7, 1987

CE049441

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Each year more than one million teenagers in the United States become pregnant resulting in over 500,000 births. In Texas alone, 47,000 babies were born to teen mothers in 1985. Approximately 45% of these births were out of wedlock (Texas Department of Human Resources, 1986). Research has shown that an adolescent mother's "life chances" are limited. Brooks-Ginn and Furstenburg (1986) cite four different sources when concluding, "adolescent childbearers are less likely to complete high school, attend college, find stable employment, marry or be self-supporting than later childbearers". The education of teen mothers is often disrupted because of child birth, and the acquisition of vocational skills is minimized as well (Simkins, 1984). Many young women will never recover from these setbacks. A teen mother's lifetime income is approximately one half that of a woman whose first child is born when she is twenty (Rosenbaum, 1985). Without a quality education, career goals, or vocational skills, she has little chance of breaking out of the cycle of pregnancy and poverty.

In January 1987 a project to determine the magnitude of the teen parenting problem in the Bryan/College Station, Texas area was funded by the College of Education, Texas A&M University (TAMU). This research discovered that, in this community of approximately 100,000, there were 137 deliveries by women age 17 and under in the fifteen month period from January 1986 to March 1987 (Pruitt, 1987). It was also determined that a significant number of these young women had not been identified by the area schools. The investigator concluded that the local schools were not currently meeting the needs of local teen mothers.

Based on these results the Brazos Valley Private Industry Council was approached to provide Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) funds for a project which would address the teen parenting problem in Bryan/College Station. Subsequent to this meeting a contract was awarded to the TAMU Department of Educational Psychology for a pilot program to provide services to 30 young mothers in the area. This contract funded OPTIONS FOR YOUNG MOTHERS at a level of approximately $9000 per month for a twelve month period beginning May 1, 1987. In addition to this funding, Brazos Valley Community Action Agency was contracted to provide transportation and child care for program participants. The primary requirement of the contract is to place at least 33% of all clients in full time employment at above minimum wage. In order to accomplish this task a comprehensive program was developed and 14 clients were selected between May 1 and June 30, 1987. The main components of this program are life skills, GED training, counseling, and basic skills training and job placement (Jobs). Clients were assessed through the interview process as to their JTPA eligibility, education level, skills, motivation level, and potential for success. Sessions began on July 20,1987.

## Program Description

The life skills component is a ten week course that meets daily for an hour and a half. The primary goals of these sessions are to help the participants become good parents, responsible adults, and to learn to cope with the stress of parenting and working (see appendix

for references and synopsis of OPTIONS Life Skills Curriculum). Group activities and discussions, as well as numerous guest speakers facilitate the learning process. Guest speakers also serve to emphasize the importance of the information being presented and to aid the women in becoming familiar with the resources in the community that directly effect their lives.

Communication is the first topic in the life skills group. Assertiveness relating to positive relationships in the home and on the job is extensively discussed. Working effectively with fellow OPTIONS clients is stressed and comparisons are made with future work relationships. Group cohesion is an important variable in the success of the participants.

An overt goal of these sessions is to prevent future unplanned pregnancies. With this in mind, human sexuality and family planning are important topics of discussion. Extensive information on human reproduction, contraception, and sexually transmitted disease is presented. All participants are encouraged to use family planning clinics for birth control information and devices. Pregnancy, labor, and delivery as they relate to the women's experiences in childbearing are examined. The importance of quality prenatal care is also stressed and those clients who are pregnant while in the program are served by the local prenatal clinic.

Information on child development and parenting form the core of this segment of OPTIONS. Child development from birth to age five is presented and the mothers relate this information to their own children to better understand them at the present and as they grow.

Healthy parenting practices and individual parenting problems are addressed as well. An underlying theme of the parenting area is child abuse prevention. To this end the importance of achieving healthy parent child relationships is stressed.

A final area of focus in the life skills sessions is that of dual career and stress management. Although a majority of the participants have good support systems, it is important that they begin to deal with the realities of being a single parent (often an adolescent single parent) and an effective employee. Areas of common concern such as child care needs, time management, and ways of coping with stress are explored.

The GED component of the OPTIONS program is self paced and designed to teach specifically to the exam rather than to provide broad academic education. Upon entry into the program each client is given a pretest in 1) math, 2) reading, 3) writing, 4) science, and 5) social studies. Based on their performance they are placed in either pre-GED or GED materials (see appendix for list of materials). The client then proceeds through the materials with the aid of a tutor. Tutors are recruited as volunteers from the College of Education and sororities and fraternities at TAMU. To date, 23 volunteers have served an average of 2 hours each week. Progress is monitored by a half time staff member using quizzes after each segment of material is completed. When each of the five areas have been satifactorily completed the client is given a practice test which predicts the level of success on the actual GED exam. When the client achieves a passing score each section of the practice test

she is registered to take the GED at a certified center. OPTIONS provides transportation to the center and pays the $20 testing fee.

The Jobs component of the program includes career assessment and development activities, basic skill training, and job placement. Assessment includes computerized versions of the Differential Aptitude Test and The Career Decision Making System, paper and pencil self assessment instruments and weekly career counseling sessions that encourage each young woman to evaluate and internalize the personal profile she has created through the assessment and development activities.

The basic skill training sessions are held daily for approximately one hour over an eight week period. The curriculum used in this training has been adapted from several sources and is designed specifically for young low-income mothers (see appendix for references and synopsis of OPTIONS Jobs Curriculum). These sessions teach the client basic job acquisition and retention skills such as job search, interviewing, dressing and grooming, employer expectations, and coping skills. Video cameras, tape recorders, phone simulators, and computers are used to create realistic situations for role play and to provide insight into the job search and maintenance process. Guest speakers from the business community are encouraged to present true pictures of work situations so the women will understand what is required to succeed in the workplace.

Job placement activities commence at the end of the classroom segment and are based on the individuals interests, aptitudes, and available jobs. OPTIONS has been fortunate to develop good working

relationships with TAMU and several employers in the area to provide training and employment opportunities. Public service announcements on both radio and television advise local business persons of the program and solicit their participation.

Specific skill training is also provided as needed through community education, job shadowing, and on-the-job training. An eight to ten week office skills course is presently being developed that will utilize the local high schools Vocational Office Education labs two evening a week. This course will be taught by local professionals who have volunteered and will culminate in a certificate from Bryan Independent School District Community Education.

The counseling component of the program is based on the individual needs of the client and is presently filled by a part time psychological associate, however this approach has proven to be neither practical nor cost effective based on the counseling requirements of the clientele. Few program participants require psychological counseling and they can be be referred to an adjunct counselor. Many times this counseling can be paid for by the State Rehabilitation Commission or provided by Mental Health Mental Retardation.

In January 1988 the counseling program will be revamped into a guidance program that will be staffed by a full time licensed social worker. The primary responsibilities of the social worker will be to assess need and to aid the women in accessing the appropriate agency (i.e. Department of Human Services, family planning, psychological

testing or counseling, etc,), to aid in life skills and jobs group sessions, and to conduct weekly support groups (see appendix for a list of sessions). Intake, which includes screening by home visit and interview, will also be a primary responsibility of this person. In addition, a TAMU Educational Psychology doctoral student will provide some counseling and assessment on site.

## Six Month Outcomes

At the end of the first six months of operation (3.5 months actively serving clients) eleven of the original participants had completed all segments of the program with the exception of the GED. Ten are presently employed, Five in full time employment at over $4.00 per hour, two in part time employment at above minimum wage, and three in full time temporary work at above $5.00 per hour. The one woman who is not employed is actively involved in specific training. Of the remaining three original participants, two delivered babies during September and were recycled into the next class and one was dropped from the program. Eight of the clients will take the GED on December 19 (three were high school graduates when they entered the program) and all have at least a fair chance of passing some or all sections of the exam. It is hoped that all of the original clients will possess their GED by May 1988.

Child care continues to be furnished to nine of the working clients and transportation is provided to seven. Both child care and transportation must be terminated by June 30, 1988. These critical elements continue to be the largest barrier to success and unless

each woman is able to develop these resources on their own it is doubtful that they will maintain employment.

A new class of six women was selected and began the program November 15. These women, along with the two who were recycled, should complete the classroom segments by February 15 and enter the the job search mode at that time. Most of the new clients have achieved at least a tenth grade education and GED tutoring should be less than was required with the earlier group who had averaged an eighth grade completion.

## Conclusion

The OPTIONS FOR YOUNG MOTHERS program is an attempt to build a comprehensive model for young pregnant or parenting mothers that can be implemented in other mid-sized communities. It is our belief that unless supports can be built for all aspects of low income young mother's lives, few will ever be able to support themselves and their children through work. Research indicates that this idle time and these wasted lives lead to more children that cannot be supported and larger demands on the scarce resources of society. These young women must have day care for their children, the educational creditials and basic job skills to compete in the work place, transportation out of the barrios and ghettos into the mainstream where jobs can be found and maintained, life skills to become good parents and responsible adults, and freedom of choice in reproduction in order to become productive members of society. OPTIONS is one way of providing these skills and services and testing our notions.

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Texas Department of Human Services (1986). Teen Parenting Inititive. (Progress report submitted to Texas State Job Training Coordinating Council Advisory Panel on Work and Welfare). Austin, Tx: author.

## Appendix

A - Life Skills Synopsis
B - Life Skills References
C - GED Materials
D - Jobs Curriculum Synopsis
E - Jobs Curriculum References
F - Counseling Support Sessions

Appendix A - Life Skills Sessions

| UNIT | CLASSROOM HOURS |
|---|---|
| 1. Communication/ assertiveness | 10 |
| 2. Family planning | 6 |
| 3. Child development | 10 |
| 4. Parenting | 20 |
| 5. Women at work/ stress management | 6 |
| 6. Community resources | 8 |
| TOTAL | 60 |

Appendix B - Reference Material


Bignell, S., Ed. (1980). Family Life Education: Curriculum Guide. Santa Cruz, CA: Network Publications.

Changing Times Education Service (1987). Parenting Three to Six. Saint Paul, MN: EMC Publishing.

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Crary, E. (1981). Without Spanking or Spoiling. Seattle, WA: Parenting Press.

Griffin, W. P. (1986). Single Parent/Homemaker and Wage Earner: Techniques for Managing Dual Roles. Lubbock, TX: Home Economics Curriculum Center.

Hunter-Geboy, C., Peterson, L., Casey, S., Hardy, L., & Renner, S. (1985). Life Planning Education. Washington, D. C.: Center for Population Options.

Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation (1982). A Community of Caring. Washington, D. C.: author.

Popkin, M. H. (1983). Active Parenting. Atlanta, GA: Active Parenting, Inc.

Appendix C - GED Materials

| Pre-GED | Steck-Vaughn * Number |
|---|---|
| Math | 1876-6 |
| Reading | 1878-2 |
| Science | 1877-4 |
| Social Studies | 1875-8 |
| Writing | 1879-0 |
| **GED** | |
| Math | 1897-9 |
| Reading Literature & the Arts | 1898-7 |
| Science | 1895-2 |
| Social Studies | 1896-0 |
| Writing Sample | 1846-4 |
| Writing Skills | 1894-4 |
| Language Skill 610 | 1089-7 |
| Language Skill 720 | 1090-0 |
| Language Skill 830 | 1091-9 |
| Language Skill 940 | 1092-7 |
| Math Skill 5500 | 0638-5 |
| Math Skill 6600 | 0639-3 |
| Math Skill 7700 | 0710-1 |
| Math Skill 8800 | 1097-8 |
| **Pre-Tests** | **Number** |
| Math | Level 1 WRAT |
| The Reading Progress Scale ** | 2-C |
| **Practice Tests** | **Number** |
| Steck-Vaughn General Education Perfomance Index | |
| Form AA | 0755-1 |
| Form BB | 0757-8 |
| Official GED Practice Test *** | |
| Form A | 3AGE1 |
| Form B | 3AGE2 |

* Steck-Vaughn Company
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Appendix D - Basic Skills Training Units

| UNIT | CLASSROOM HOURS |
|---|---|
| 1. Introduction | 1 |
| 2. Self Assessment | 4 |
| 3. Self Concept | 3 |
| 4. Skills Identification | 3 |
| 5. Nontraditional Jobs | 1 |
| 6. Job Identification | 2 |
| 7. Goals and Road Mapping | 2 |
| 8. Finding Job Openings | 2 |
| 9. Fear Analysis | 1 |
| 10. Dress for Success | 1 |
| 11. Telephoning for Interviews | 2 |
| 12. Applications | 1 |
| 13. Resume | 2 |
| 14. Communication in the Interview | 2 |
| 15. Interview Questions | 2 |
| 16. Interview Roleplay | 6 |
| 17. Interview Follow up | 1 |
| 18. Job Retention | 3 |
| 19. Employee Information | 1 |
| TOTAL | 40 |

Appendix E - Reference Material


Family Self Support Region Six (1986, July). Assessments and Employability Planning. Texas Department of Human Services Bryan, Texas.

Home Economics Instructional Materials Center (1980). Consumer Education for Families with Limited Incomes. Texas Tech University.

McGee, E. (1985). Training for Transition: A Guide for Training Young Mothers in Employability Skills. New York, New York. Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

Polit, D. (1986). Building Self-Sufficiency: A Guide to Vocational and Employment Services for Teenage Parents. Jefferson City, Mo. Humanalysis, Inc.

Quint, J., Polit, D., and Guy, C. (1986). New Chance: Laying the Groundwork for a New Demonstration to Build Human Capital Among Low-Income Young Mothers. New York, New York. Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

Appendix F - Counseling Support Groups

| GROUP | SESSION HOURS |
|---|---|
| 1. Support Network and Coping | 1 |
| 2. Values | 1 |
| 3. Keeping Up When Feeling Low | 1 |
| 4. Women at Work | 1 |
| 5. Assertiveness | 1 |
| 6. Home and Work | 1 |
| 7. Choices for Change | 1 |
| 8. Coping with Change | 1 |
| TOTAL | 8 |